

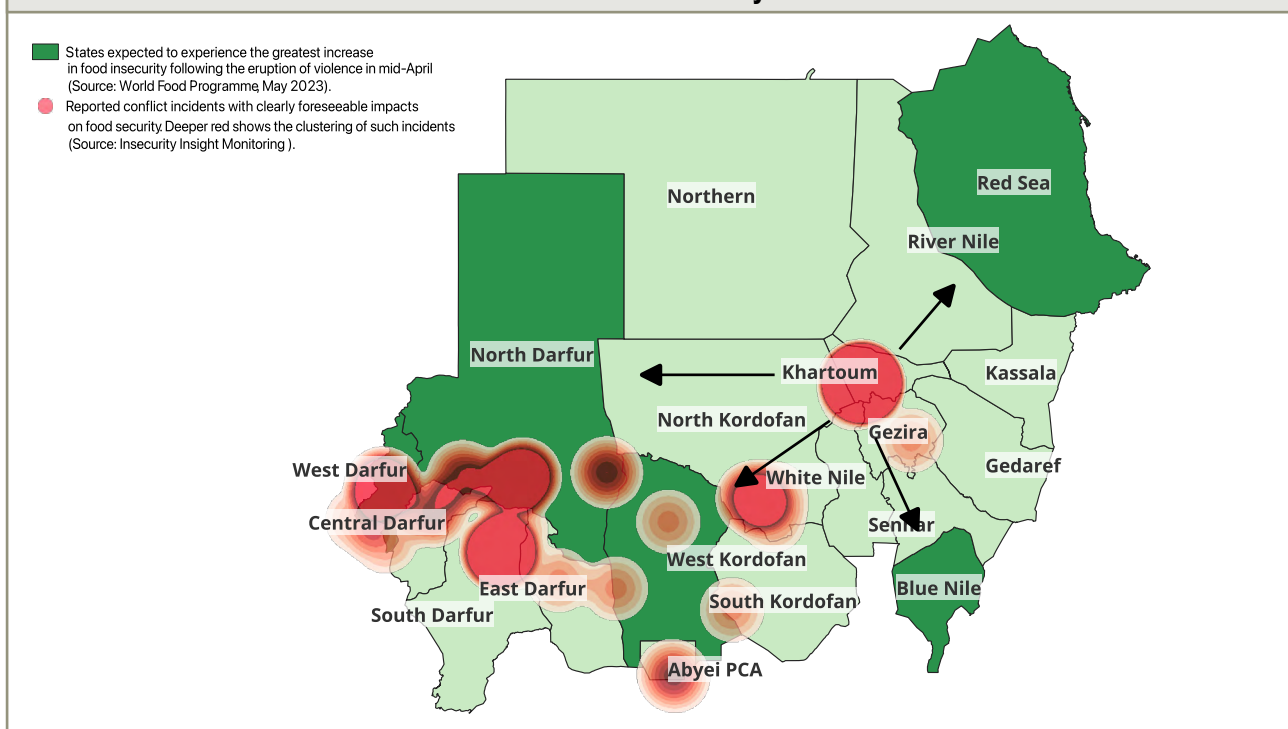


1. Introduction and context

On 15 April 2023 violence erupted in the Sudanese capital, Khartoum, between the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), a paramilitary group that had **agreed** to share Sudan's governance with the SAF and a civilian coalition in August 2019. The violence soon spread widely across the country and has been **especially fierce** across the five states comprising the Darfur region¹ and in North Kordofan state. Although an **agreement** was reached on 12 May committing the SAF and RSF to uphold international humanitarian law and allow the delivery of humanitarian assistance, **reports** suggest it has not been strictly upheld. Similarly, a ceasefire between the SAF and RSF from 22 May to 3 June had **limited impact** on the prevalence of violence across the country and saw its **continuation** in Darfur.

The violence marks the latest episode in the recurring instability that has occurred since Sudan gained its independence in 1956 and follows in the wake of an October 2021 military coup. Such political instability coupled with inconsistent rainfalls, macroeconomic shocks and price rises following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine – prior to which **80%** of Sudan's wheat imports were from Ukraine and Russia – had already contributed to high levels of food insecurity prior to the current crisis. This was especially apparent in the Sudanese states of West, Central and North Darfur, where the **estimated** proportions of populations experiencing food insecurity ranged between 56% and 65% in 2021. The current violence seriously exacerbates this, and will be made even worse by the usual challenges presented by Sudan's **lean season** between June and September, when food is typically hardest to access due to food supplies from the previous harvest becoming less plentiful or even running out. In the next two to five months continuing violence is therefore **expected** to push a further 2-2.5 million people in Sudan into hunger. This would result in acute food insecurity in the country reaching unprecedented levels, with over 19 million people – around two-fifths of the population – affected.

Figure 1. Heat map showing the distribution of reported conflict incidents with clearly foreseeable impacts on food security in Sudan (15 April – 16 June 2023) and their likely reverberating effects across the country



Within Sudan the conflict is likely to affect food insecurity in different ways, owing not only to developments in the conflict itself, but also to varying diets among the population, demographics and food sources. Imported wheat bread is staple to diets in urban areas such as Khartoum, whereas millet and sorghum porridge and pancakes form an essential part of the diets of the majority of people in rural areas, where around **two-thirds** of the population live.² For the latter, Sudan produced roughly as much millet and sorghum as it consumed before the current conflict. By contrast, **figures** for 2021 show that only a quarter of the wheat consumed in Sudan was produced domestically. Furthermore, of the commercial crops grown in Sudan, the majority are **produced** on irrigated land along the White and Blue Nile rivers. Consequently, variations in how the conflict affects these different geographical regions and processes will produce differentials in food security outcomes in rural and urban areas. As of May 2023 the UN **estimates** that the increase in food insecurity due to the crisis would be greatest in the states of West and North Darfur, West Kordofan, Blue Nile, and Red Sea.

2. Objectives and key findings

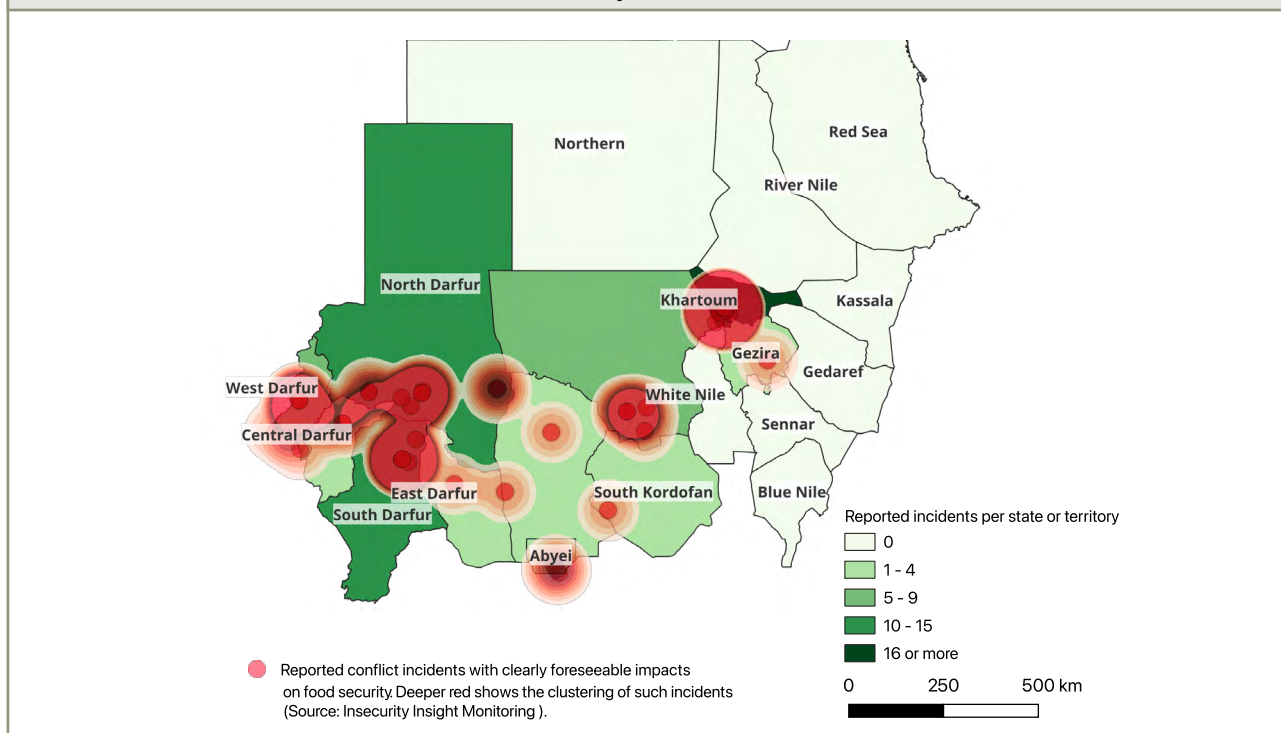
This briefing discusses specific conflict incidents with clearly foreseeable consequences for civilians and civilian objects necessary for achieving food security. In doing so, it aims to help break the vicious cycle between armed conflict and food insecurity and provide recommendations for policymakers, analysts, and aid agencies on how to address conflict and hunger using an international humanitarian law framework centred on **anticipatory action**. It follows the fifth anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 2417, which gave unprecedented recognition to the links between conflict and food insecurity. Sadly, its findings illustrate that, in Sudan, **Resolution 2417** could not be more pertinent than it is at present:

- At least 80 conflict incidents directly affecting food security were reported in Sudan between 15 April and 16 June 2023, almost half of which occurred in Khartoum state. Other incidents primarily occurred in the Darfur region. The remaining incidents were mainly recorded in North and West Kordofan, but also in Gezira state and the Abyei administrative area.³ It is possible that there are different levels of event under-reporting in different regions of the country.
- More than half of the reported incidents adversely affecting food security occurred at markets. Included among these incidents are events in which markets were looted, torched, struck by air strikes and destroyed amid violent clashes.
- At least two food production factories are reported to have been destroyed in Khartoum North, Khartoum state.
- Water infrastructure has been damaged and water supplies disrupted.
- Severe security risks illustrated by the killings of three World Food Programme (WFP) staff in North Darfur and large-scale looting of food aid have created considerable obstacles for humanitarian responses to the crisis.
- Broader incidents of political violence beyond the 80 incidents documented here (with the most clearly foreseeable consequences for food security) have also had severe consequences. The **Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project** (ACLED) identified 914 incidents of political violence in Sudan between 15 April and 16 June. The overall violence undermined the ability of civilians to safely travel to access food, disrupted food distribution systems and supply chains, and triggered mass displacement.

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Figure 2. The location of reported conflict incidents adversely affecting food security in Sudan, 15 April-16 June 2023⁸



The contributions of conflict events to increased food insecurity

This briefing is part of a **series** exploring the ways in which conflict events undermine food security, with the aim of contributing to efforts to improve our understanding of the connections between conflict and hunger.⁶ It is also one of a series of briefings providing the aid sector with data and information to support evidence-based policymaking that strengthens human security for aid recipients and aid agency staff in the current crisis in Sudan. This document focuses on reported conflict events affecting food insecurity in Sudan following the severe escalation of violence in the country since 15 April 2023. The analysis is based on the Food Insecurity and Violent Conflict (FIVC)-Sudan dataset, an event-based dataset compiled by Insecurity Insight from open sources and partner contributions for the period of 15 April-16 June 2023. The **data** is accessible on the Humanitarian Data Exchange.⁷

The following section of this briefing considers reported incidents adversely affecting food security by region, before considering the impact of these incidents on food security. The next section focuses specifically on the ways in which reported incidents increase food insecurity, while the following one discusses how such incidents affect humanitarian food aid agencies and food aid delivery. Subsequent sections focus on disruptions to imports and exports and conflict-triggered mass displacement. Finally, conclusions and recommendations are given.

3. Incidents/events adversely affecting food security

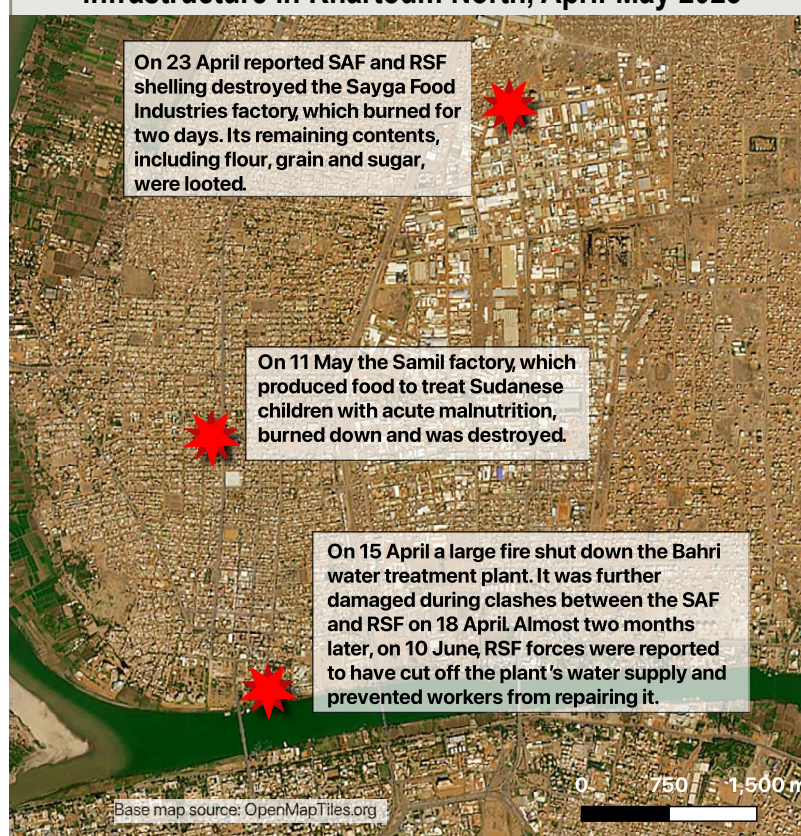
Incidents reported in Khartoum state

As noted, approximately half of all incidents affecting food insecurity between 15 April and 2 June 2023 were **reported** from Khartoum state. This reflects the high concentration of fighting in this area since the conflict's outbreak in mid-April.

At least two key food factories are reported to have been destroyed in the important industrial city of Khartoum North, undermining the country's ability to produce food at a time when supplies are increasingly **running short**. On 23 April SAF and RSF shelling destroyed the Sayga Food Industries factory in Khartoum North, which burned for two days. The factory had previously produced 5,500 tonnes of flour a day, employed approximately 8,000 workers, and was regarded as one of **"the most significant bread and flour producers"** in Sudan. Similarly, in a separate incident on 11 May, the Samil factory in Khartoum North was burned down and destroyed, including key machinery and the equivalent of food for approximately **14,500 children**. In 2022 the factory had **produced 60%** of the ready-to-use therapeutic food to treat children with severe acute malnutrition in Sudan, as well as ready-to-use supplementary food provided by the WFP. The exact cause of the fire remains unclear.

Markets in Khartoum have also suffered considerable damage and destruction. For example, the central market in Khartoum North is reported to have been damaged by fire during clashes between the SAF and RSF on 22 April. Meanwhile, on 1 May air strikes are reported to have struck the Al Shaby Omdurman market, where RSF forces were stationed. A week later, on 9 May, an unidentified group destroyed and looted the Al Shabee market in Omdurman. Despite the ceasefire agreement, Souk Sitta (Market Six) in southern Khartoum is also **reported** to have been destroyed by rocket fire on 1 June during fighting between the opposing sides.

Figure 3. Examples of reported damage to and destruction of food production factories and water infrastructure in Khartoum North, April-May 2023



Water infrastructure that is key for sanitation and cooking has also been damaged, **disrupting** water supplies across Khartoum state. On 15 April a large fire shut down the Bahri water plant in Khartoum North. Subsequently, security concerns and reported obstruction by military forces meant that engineers **struggled to access** the plant to repair it. It was also damaged further during clashes between the RSF and SAF on 18 April involving the use of heavy and medium artillery and anti-aircraft guns. Almost two months later, on 10 June, the plant's operations were hampered again when RSF forces were reported to have cut off its water supply and prevented workers from repairing the plant. The damage to the Bahri water plant is not unique. The Beit Al Maal water plant in Omdurman is **reported** to have been “exposed to heavy fire” on 17 April, causing workers to evacuate the site. At least one health facility in Khartoum – the Fedail Hospital – has also had its water tanks damaged by explosive weapons used on 18 April during fighting between the SAF and RSF.

At least one incident directly affected farms in Shambat, Khartoum, which are reported to have been targeted by SAF air strikes on 29 May. The extent of the damage caused to the farms remains unclear.

Amid the damage and destruction caused by the fighting, widespread looting has occurred. In some cases buildings have been looted following their destruction. For example, the Sayga **Food Industries factory** is reported to have initially been looted by “criminal gangs” and later by civilians who took sacks of flour and grain, bags of sugar, and gas canisters after the factory was struck by shelling on 23 April.

At least eight incidents were reported involving the looting of markets in Khartoum, including one incident on 22 April in which unidentified perpetrators looted 17 markets in Omdurman city. This is likely to be a considerable under-representation of the extent of the problem. Indeed, a **flash survey** conducted by Mercy Corps in May that interviewed traders in Khartoum found there to be “general looting” of markets. It is possible that the frequency with which the looting of markets and food supplies has occurred has led it to become a “normalised” feature of life in Khartoum, thereby discouraging the reporting of incidents in a systematic way.

Furthermore, RSF and SAF competition for control of key infrastructure needed to maintain food security has created threats for staff operating this infrastructure. For example, RSF forces were reported to have arrested workers from the Soba water station in Soba West, Khartoum, on 4 June, and as of 6 June the RSF reportedly **controlled** four water stations in Khartoum.

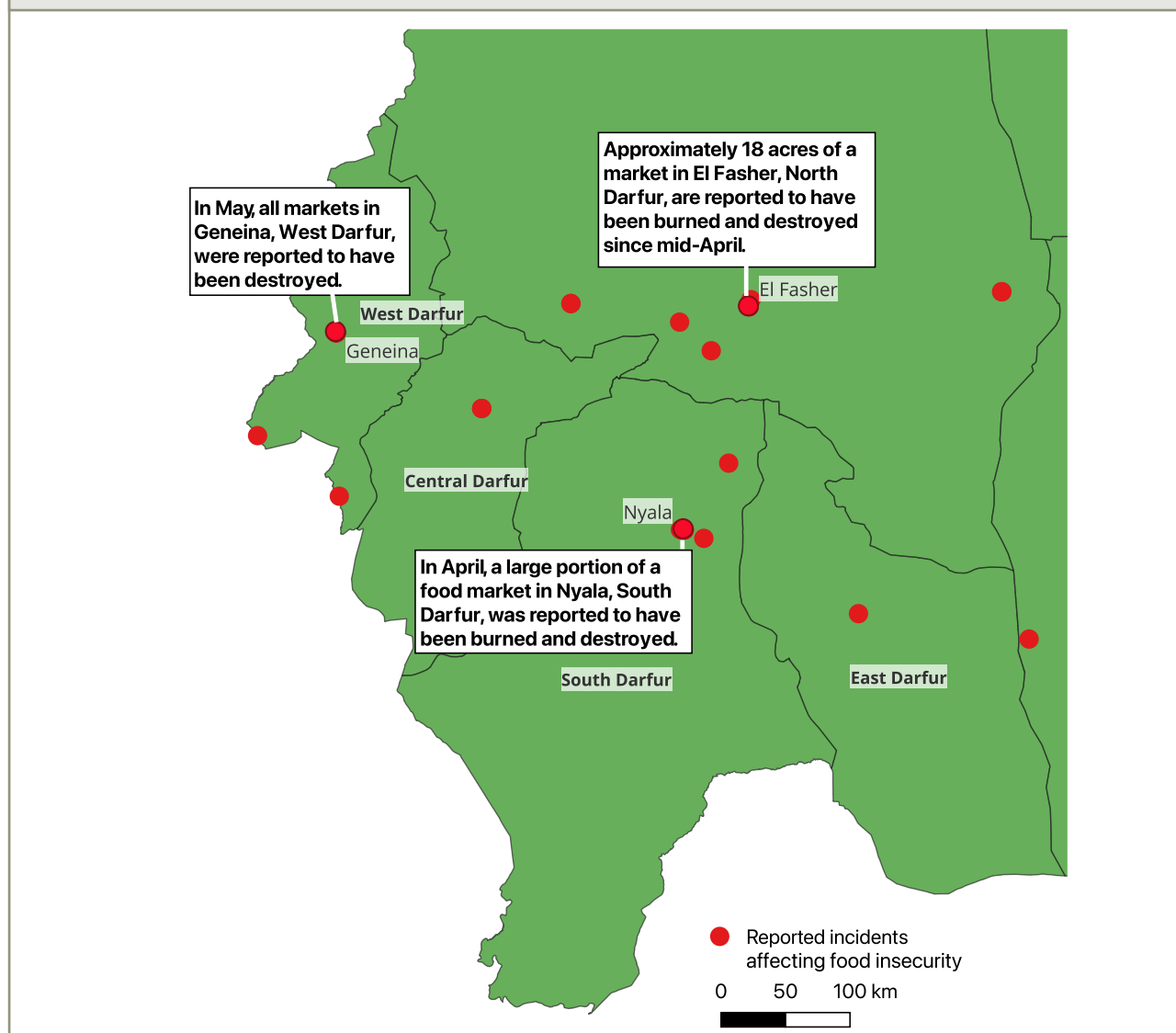
Incidents reported in the Darfur region

The vast majority of reported incidents affecting food insecurity outside of Khartoum state were recorded across the Darfur region, with almost half of these occurring in North Darfur, but also frequently being reported in South and West Darfur. In the Darfur region there are **fears** of a reignition of ethnic violence similar to that witnessed 20 years ago, when the central government deployed the Janjaweed Arab militia to quash an uprising by non-Arab groups.

What are “incidents”?

Reported conflict events, also called incidents, include the destruction of food production factories, markets and water infrastructure; the killing of food aid workers; and the looting of food. Mass displacement and economic inflation have also increased food insecurity in Sudan and internationally, especially in neighbouring countries where high numbers of displaced people have taken refuge from the fighting in Sudan. The analysis shows that the impact of reported incidents is likely to be long-term, reverberating beyond the location in which they were first recorded.

Figure 4: Examples of reported incidents affecting food security in the Darfur region



In the current conflict 21 of the 32 reported incidents in Darfur were recorded at markets, many of which have been damaged or destroyed on an extensive scale. For example, approximately **18 acres of a market** that sold food and other supplies close to a camp for displaced peoples in El Fasher, North Darfur, are reported to have been burned and destroyed since fighting began in mid-April. Aid agency personnel at the camp suggest the fire is likely to have been caused either by stray bullets or fires ignited in shops by looters. In El Geneina, West Darfur, the scale of destruction is especially great, with all markets in the town reported to have been **destroyed**. This followed incidents on 25 and 26 April, when SAF forces were reported to have set fire to and looted markets during clashes with the RSF, as well as burning houses. Similarly, on 19 April a market in Tawila, North Darfur, was set on fire by suspected projectiles fired during nearby clashes between SAF and RSF forces. In some cases civilians have been present at markets while the sites have been subjected to violence. For example, on 24 April it is reported that SAF members opened fire indiscriminately at a market in the Al-Shorfa area in El Fasher, North Darfur, when civilians were present.

However, the most frequently reported incidents at markets in Darfur involved looting. In total, at least nine such incidents were reported, all but two of which occurred during the first two weeks of fighting. Named conflict parties involved in these incidents included the RSF and Darfuri communal militias. As is apparent in Khartoum state, it is likely that the reported figure is a considerable under-representation of the extent of the problem.

In other looting incidents, militants are reported to have stolen livestock in South Darfur on 18 April, and in another incident in South Darfur on 9 May militants seized water infrastructure during a wider attack involving the burning of 17 villages.

Reported incidents in North, West and South Kordofan, Abyei, and Gezira

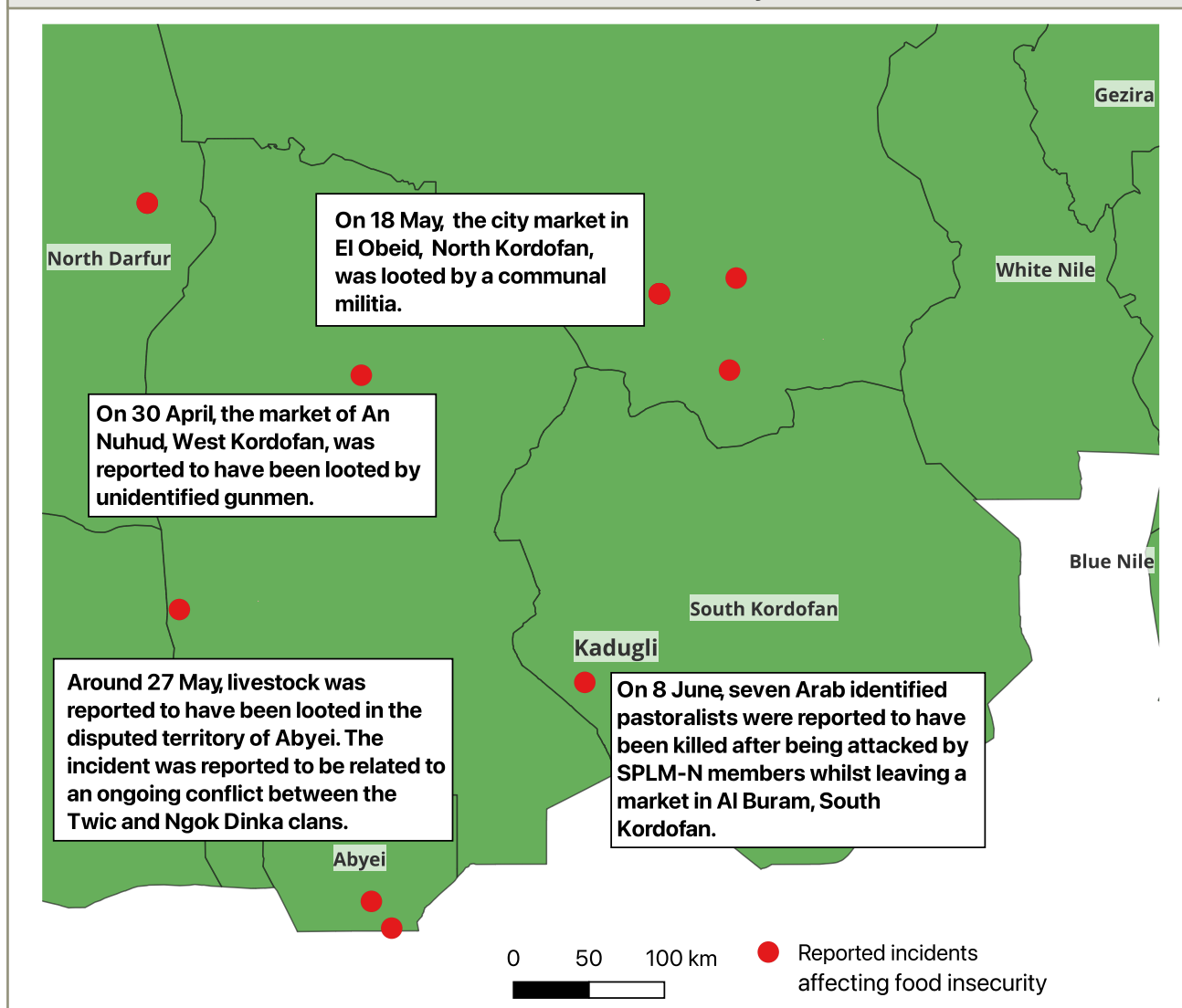
In North Kordofan, where heavy fighting has occurred centred around the strategically important state capital, El Obeid, conflict events also impacted food security. Markets were looted in El Obeid and El Rahad. In Ar Rahad, North Kordofan, a clash between the RSF and pastoralists followed on 31 May after the RSF had attempted to loot property and set fire to civilian homes.

In West Kordofan, a market in An Nuhud was looted by an unidentified armed group at the end of April, and in May another market saw the looting of cattle and clashes between the Misseriya and Maaliya ethnic groups.

In South Kordofan, seven Arab identified pastoralists were reported to have been killed after being attacked by members of the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement North (SPLM-N) while leaving a market in Al Buram on 8 June.

Livestock was also reported to have been looted in Abyei in the context of an ongoing dispute between the Twic and Ngok Dinka clans.

Figure 5: Examples of reported incidents adversely affecting food security in North, West and South Kordofan and Abyei



The potential aggravation of violence from land-related disputes between sedentary farmers and migratory pastoralists

Increased security vacuums across Sudan due to the current fighting have the potential to aggravate long-standing disputes between farmers and pastoralists, undermining the ability of these individuals to freely carry out their activities and produce food. Indeed, amid ongoing fighting between the SAF and RSF, **16 people were reported killed** in May in clashes between Hausa and Nuba ethnic groups in White Nile state. While it was not clear what motivated the violence, there have been **long-running disputes** between the two groups over the use of water and land resources by farmers and herders. In the future, the potential for increases in such violence is **particularly great** in Darfur between Darfurian non-Arab farmers and Arab herders, given the high intensity of fighting in this region and the “militarisation of ethnic identities” between these groups.

Typically, **farmer-herder violence** is especially high after the **rainy season** (June-September) and during Sudan’s harvest seasons, which fall in November and December for millet and sorghum, and in March for wheat.⁹ In these periods the grazing of livestock on farmers’ land can result in crops being destroyed before their produce is harvested, triggering potentially violent disputes. Moreover, the start of the harvest season for millet and sorghum coincides with the end of the rainy season, when herders are likely to require fresh pasture for their livestock. The risk of these situations arising is enhanced if crops are grown in migratory routes.

Efforts to address farmer-herder disputes have led to specific rules allowing herders to graze their herds on fields only at specific times, depending on the crops primarily grown in a particular state. Typically, this comes in the form of the “**talaig**”, which is a date set by tribal authorities “when pastoralist livestock herds are permitted to enter farms after the harvest” to graze on crop residues and stubble. For example, in North Darfur it has been agreed that **livestock can be released** onto farmlands after 7 February, but specific dates vary across Sudan, depending on the plentifulness of a particular year’s rainfall and harvests.

Unfortunately, demographic pressures on natural resources and other environmental pressures have led to **frequent violations** of the *talaig* custom and outbreaks of violence. Current academic research and existing practice suggest that durable long-term solutions to disputes between farmers and pastoralists are most likely to be achieved by locally led peacebuilding strategies that place farmers and pastoralists at the centre and involve their active input and participation.¹⁰

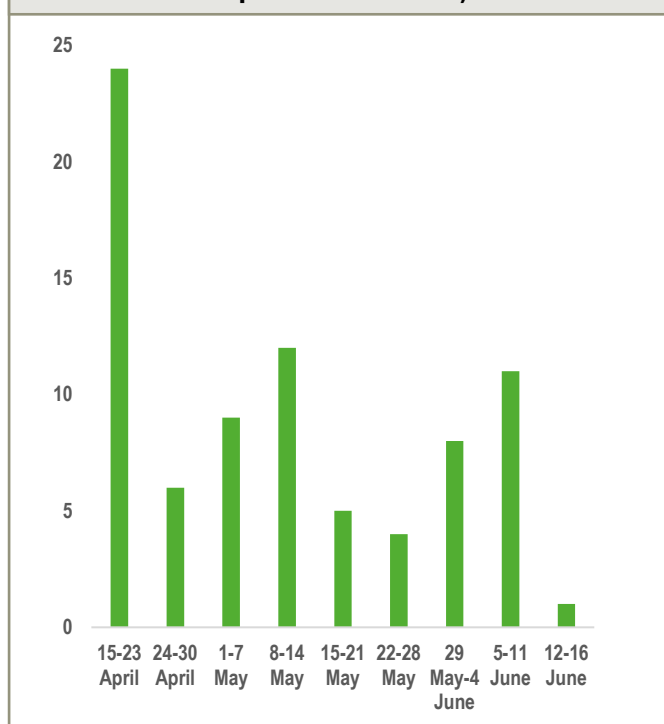
4. The impact of reported incidents on food insecurity

The frequency of reported incidents with the most clearly foreseeable consequences for food security was most marked during the first week of the conflict. The number of reported incidents has declined since then, but they continue to occur every week. The extent of the impact of conflict events will vary depending on the nature of specific incidents; the position of individuals and communities within Sudan’s food system; and the degree to which other actors are self-sufficient or dependent on the efficient functioning of national or global food systems. Their negative impacts on food security will be long term, cumulative and reverberating.

Notably, their reverberating impacts coupled with varying demographic and economic characteristics and differences in pre-conflict fragility and resilience levels means that the location of the reported incidents does not necessarily correspond with the regions of Sudan which will experience the greatest increases in food insecurity. For example, despite Insecurity Insight having recorded the highest numbers of incidents with clearly foreseeable consequences for food security in Khartoum state, this is not one of those expected by the World Food Programme to experience the greatest increases in food insecurity following the onset of violence in mid-April. However, events such as the destruction of food production factories in Khartoum will likely have wide ranging impacts across the country by reducing the availability of food for distribution and physical as well as economic access due to losses of employment and incomes.

As of 24 May, the combined impact of the paralysis or non-functioning of many basic services and markets in the near to medium term was **estimated** by FEWS NET to lead to a rise in the number of people in need of food aid to around 10-12 million during the lean season. The way in which the conflict is leading to this situation is illustrated by considering the impact of events on food availability and physical and economic access to food.

Figure 6: Eight weeks of violence: reported conflict incidents adversely affecting food security in Sudan, 15 April-16 June (80 reported incidents)



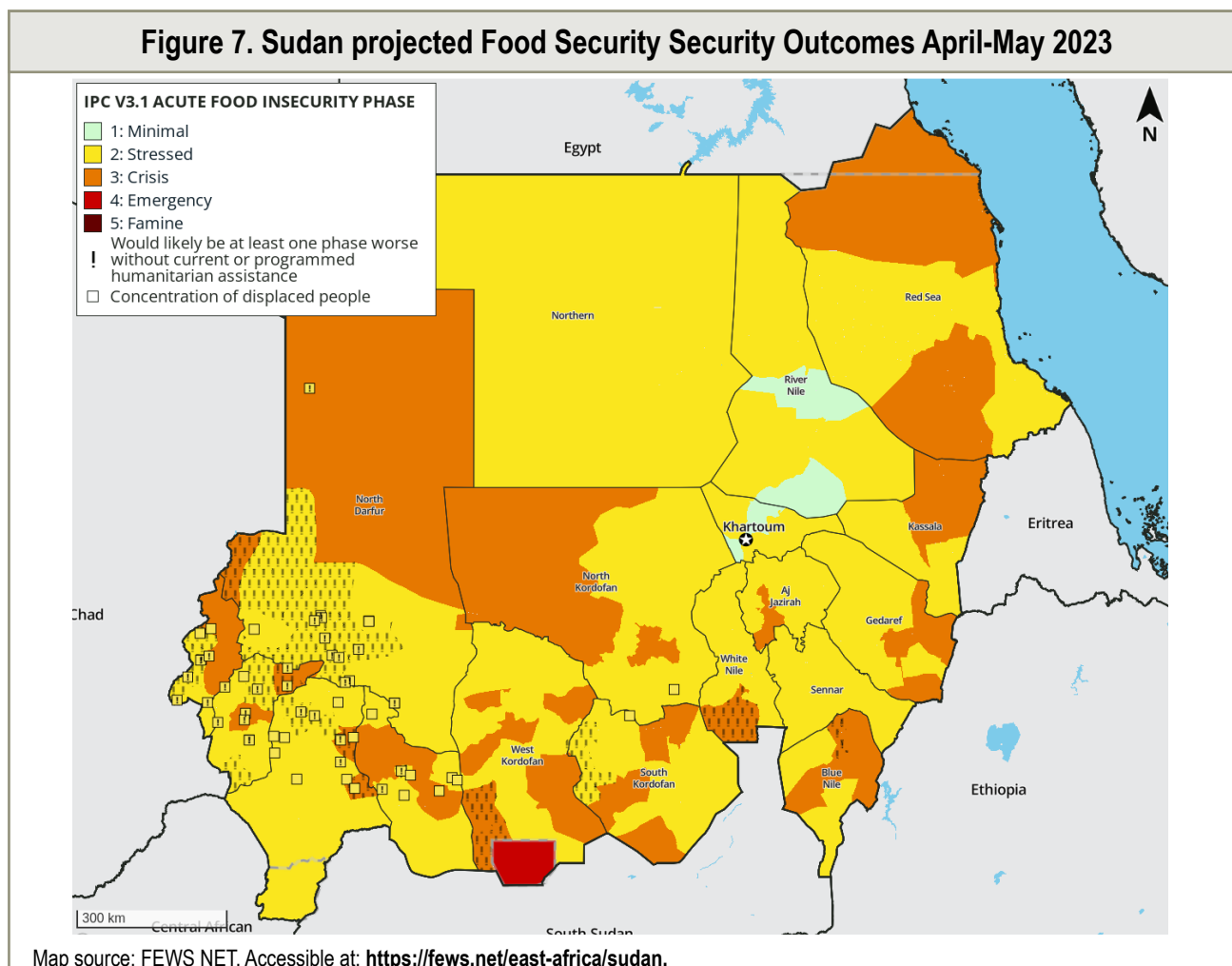
The destruction of food factories and markets in Khartoum and Darfur has directly reduced food availability. This is both due to the destruction of previously existing food supplies and, in the case of factories, disruption to future production. Many of the markets that have been destroyed or damaged played a central role in Sudan’s food distribution system, and numerous retailers and end users were dependent on them. In such cases, the impact of their destruction is likely to be especially grave. For example, El Geneina’s large central market was **critical** for many parts of the food distribution system, including the supply of seeds, pesticides, water pumps and fuel, and the processing of food items such as dried tomatoes, groundnuts and hot pepper. All these processes have been severely disrupted, undermining physical access to food. Food prices have also increased, limiting civilians’ ability to purchase goods even when this is still possible.

Violence at markets and broader insecurity across the country also create obstacles to people’s ability to travel safely to access food supplies, a situation made worse by the restrictions on the opening of market stalls in some areas due to security concerns. For example, **interviews** conducted by Mercy Corps in May found that traders in Khartoum often closed their market stalls earlier in the day compared to before the fighting due to a tendency for looting to increase at night. In short, acute obstacles to people’s ability to physically access food have emerged. These obstacles have exacerbated the economic barriers created by increased food prices.

On 28 April a market vegetable seller in Omdurman, Khartoum state, **noted** that the cost of transporting vegetables from a souk (bazaar) on the other side of the city to the market had risen from SDG 1,500 to SDG 10,000 since the start of the crisis. At the same market, the price of sugar had increased from SDG 6,000 to SDG 10,000. Prices have also risen in neighbouring countries. For example, the price of a “food basket” in the states of South Sudan bordering Sudan is **reported** to have risen by up to 28%.

However, amid the reports of the overall increases in food prices, it is also notable that in Geneina city it was **reported** in June that there is a “widespread” trade in looted food, including sacks of millet, corn and peanuts, at “very low prices”. This underscores the complexity of the relationship between the incidents documented in this report and their impact on food insecurity. In the short-term, the looted food available at lower prices may reduce some economic barriers that prevent some individuals from buying food. Yet, equally, the looting of the food will lead to increased costs for those who lost the goods, deprived them of potential income, and, as noted, caused changes in the behaviour of market sellers, which in turn create physical barriers to those seeking to buy food in the future. It further underlines how these impacts are long term, cumulative and reverberating.

Figure 7. Sudan projected Food Security Security Outcomes April-May 2023



Geographically, the impact of the conflict is likely to be especially grave in the Darfur region which already hosted large numbers of conflict affected populations before mid-April 2023. North and West Darfur are among the five Sudanese states **expected** to experience the highest levels of food insecurity in the country this year. In this context, the noted large-scale destruction of markets in cities such as El Fasher in North Darfur and towns such as El Geneina in West Darfur are particularly concerning. Red Sea and Blue Nile state are also expected to experience particularly grave increases in food insecurity. Red Sea state, an area of marginal agricultural production, was already home to 550,000 people (representing

19% of the state population) experiencing crisis and above food security levels between October 2022 and February 2023 **according** to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification. Like Darfur, Blue Nile state also hosted large numbers of conflict affected populations before the current crisis. Sudan's centralised transportation system has the potential to make rural areas particularly vulnerable due to difficulties in accessing these areas.

Furthermore, it is probable that the conflict will have disproportionate adverse consequences for the food security of vulnerable groups, including the elderly, who are less physically mobile, and women who have **previously sacrificed meals** so that their children have enough to eat. In May, an inability to access sufficient food and water following the outbreak of fighting is reported to have led at least one 87-year-old woman who lived in Khartoum to **"starve to death"**.

In the long term, it is possible that the conflict will cause behavioural changes among farmers and pastoralists that reduce food production. For example, **recent evidence** from Darfur suggests that farmers could be encouraged to plant fewer crops due to their anticipation of reduced demand and may switch to growing cash crops or bush products, including charcoal, to compensate for their lower incomes. These behaviours will further reduce future production and food availability, contributing to a negative spiral for food security.

Finally, damage to water infrastructure and the dysfunctionality of treatment plants in Khartoum state has led to more than **one million people** becoming dependent on unsafe drinking water. This increases the risk of outbreaks of water-borne diseases and makes a balanced and nutritious diet more difficult to achieve, given the extensive use of water in cooking.

Certainly, civilians have attempted to mitigate the impact of security risks and overcome barriers to accessing food through their own initiatives in Sudan and by collaborating with diaspora groups. One example is illustrated by neighbourhood resistance committees that comprise a **diverse collection** of pro-democracy groups, including political parties, employee unions and civil society organisations. Such groups have been involved in a wide range of activities, ranging from helping with food distribution to **cooking meals for doctors**. Similarly, **food banks** such as the Khartoum city food bank aim "to provide food for families in the neighbourhoods affected by the war between the SAF and the RSF". Members of the **Sudanese diaspora** have supported these initiatives financially and by communicating information regarding security risks based on international reports so that civilians can travel safely to reach food. Unfortunately, while making hugely positive differences to individual lives, which must be supported, these initiatives are unlikely to offset the extensive negative effects of the conflict on food security, given the scale of the challenge. This is especially the case given that members of such initiatives face similar security challenges to Sudan's population as a whole, with at least two neighbourhood resistance committee members reported to have been abducted by RSF forces in Khartoum on 3 June.

5. The impact of reported incidents on food aid delivery

Some of the greatest challenges for humanitarian food aid delivery occurred when fighting first broke out. On 15 April a WFP-managed UN Humanitarian Air Service aircraft was severely damaged at Khartoum International Airport during exchanges of gunfire. On the same day (15 April), three WFP employees were killed and two wounded in clashes between the SAF and RSF in Kebkabiya, North Darfur. In response to the killings, WFP operations were immediately suspended in Sudan, only **resuming** on 1 May. Despite this, the threats

facing food aid workers continued during the period of suspension. For example, on 17 April RSF members invaded the house of an international FAO staffer near Ozone area, Khartoum, and stole his laptop, cash and passport.

In addition, the looting of food aid itself has occurred on a large scale. Reported incidents were spread across East and South Darfur, North Kordofan, and Khartoum. Although perpetrators were often unidentified, the RSF was named in at least one incident in Khartoum on 6 May in which WFP warehouses were looted and six of the organisation's cars stolen. In several incidents in May, WFP food trucks were reported to have been looted en route to Darfur despite assurances of safety. As of 14 June, at least **40,609 metric tonnes** of food commodities had been taken from the WFP, equivalent to over US\$30.2 million in value. In total, the amount of food looted would have been enough to feed more than **three million people** for a one-month period.¹¹

Such conflict-related losses have undermined the ability of food aid to effectively play its **subsidiary role** in a context in which humanitarian aid agencies already faced severe challenges. WFP Sudan had a **US\$300 million funding shortfall** before fighting broke out, and the combined losses since mid-April of food commodities, together with other goods such as equipment, cash, workshop inventory and truck fleet, have added US\$77.6 million in costs for the organisation.

However, arguably the greatest impediment to responses has been the insecurity created by the fighting. This has severely heightened security risks for aid agencies and their personnel, especially in Khartoum, the Darfur region, and North Kordofan. On 10 May a major aid agency confirmed that “many aid operations” in Khartoum city and Darfur (including programmes targeting child malnutrition in Central Darfur) remained **suspended** due to “extreme insecurity”. As such, aid agencies’ efforts have **focused** on states where there is greater certainty that their activities can be carried out safely, such as Kassala, White Nile and Gedaref. Many aid agencies have also moved the base of their operations to Port Sudan in Red Sea state due to its relative safety compared with Khartoum. While such moves are essential for staff safety and the continuation of food assistance programmes, they adversely affect the efficiency of operations. For example, Port Sudan is approximately **1,700 kilometres** from conflict-affected areas such as the town of El Geneina in West Darfur. This reduces the pace of aid agencies’ response to emerging challenges and their ability to respond quickly and effectively to such challenges when they arise.

The conflict has created an array of further challenges for aid responses in Sudan and internationally. The dysfunctionality of the Sudanese banking system since the outbreak of fighting has **disrupted cash-based assistance programmes**, leading agencies to focus on supplying food rations instead. Meanwhile, violence in Sudan – especially in the south of the country – has had external consequences for food assistance programmes by **obstructing** the transport of food aid across the border into South Sudan, where **7.7 million people** face severe food insecurity.

If disruptions to food aid delivery continue, the overall impact on food security for the lives of individuals could be severe. A **FEWS NET estimate** suggests that for Sudan a “prolonged suspension of food assistance will most likely result in the deterioration of outcomes by at least one Integrated Food Security Classification (IPC) phase in areas where food assistance was previously assessed to be preventing worse outcomes”.¹² This is likely to be especially the case in the regions of greater Darfur and parts of greater Kordofan and greater Nile. Parts of these are already in IPC phase 3 (“crisis”), with a deterioration seeing them move into phase 4 (“emergency”), where households may have “large food consumption gaps which are reflected in very high acute malnutrition and excess mortality”.¹³

6. The conflict's impact on national and global food systems: imports and exports through Port Sudan

Disruptions to operations at Port Sudan have the potential to further reduce available food supplies. Around **90% of Sudan's external trade** flows through this port, which initially **suspended** operations on 17 April. Although the port has reopened, the conflict is continuing to result in the pace of port activities being slower than previously. This is significant for food security because, among other factors, it was reported at the end of March 2023 that this year Sudan would have to **import 3.5 million tonnes** of wheat, which is a staple foodstuff particularly in urban areas. This revelation followed predictions of a 30% fall in projected domestic harvests of the crop due to a switch by farmers to planting different crops. Such imports depend on smooth operations at the port. **Shortages of imported goods**, including wheat flour, oil and tomato paste, have already been reported.

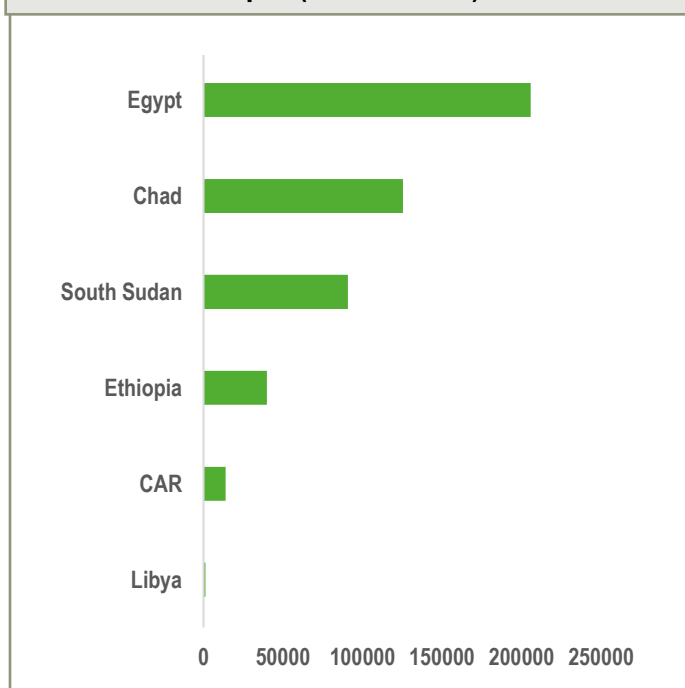
Internationally, exports of key commodities are reported to have **halted**. Before the crisis, Sudan was the world's third **largest exporter of ground nuts** and the **second largest exporter of other oily seeds**.¹⁴ Combined, these exports were worth US\$904 million in 2021, with the principal destination being China, while Türkiye, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and the United Arab Emirates also constituted important markets. Similarly, Sudan is the world's **second largest exporter of live sheep and goats**, which were worth US\$239 million in 2021, with the vast majority being exported to Saudi Arabia. Other export destinations included Oman, Qatar, Kuwait and Egypt. Around 70% of the world's supply of gum arabic – a key ingredient of soft drinks – is sourced from acacia trees in the Sahel region, which runs across Sudan, and is already reported to be **difficult to source**. While soft drinks are a luxury product, if disruptions to the supply of many of the other basic commodities materialise and replacements are not found, it could result in less varied foods being available for people in countries that import Sudanese produce. In short, food insecurity could increase.

7. Conflict-triggered mass forced displacement and food insecurity

More than **1.9 million people have been displaced** following the outbreak of fighting in mid-April. This includes 1.4 million people displaced internally, the majority of whom have left Khartoum for rural areas and safety with relatives and host communities. As of 4 June, a further 476,811 people have fled to neighbouring countries (see Figure 8). The **UN Refugee Agency** estimates that the number seeking refuge in neighbouring countries could increase to 800,000 as the conflict continues.

Due to their displacement, many of these people have lost their livelihoods and housing, while food prices have risen and economic access to food has become more difficult. This situation leaves food assistance from humanitarian aid organisations, local families and support networks fundamental for displaced people's survival.

Figure 8. Reported displacement of people from Sudan to neighbouring countries since 15 April (as of 4 June)



“We’re entirely dependent on food from Chadian families”, notes one **individual newly arrived** in Chad after fleeing the conflict in Sudan in May. Makeshift living conditions for those crossing borders also mean that many refugees have **limited access to water and sanitation**. Without adequate support, and if the conflict continues, the situation is likely to continue to worsen, with **food prices expected to increase** a further 25% in Sudan over the next two to five months.

Funding shortages have exacerbated the obstacles facing displaced people attempting to access food in host countries, many of which were already hosting high numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) prior to the current crisis. The WFP warned in May that without additional financing it will be **forced to halt** assistance for over 700,000 refugees and IDPs in Chad. In the Central African Republic, where almost 14,000 people have arrived from Sudan (see Figure 6), the WFP has already **reduced food rations**.

8. Conclusions

Five years ago, UN Security Council **Resolution 2417** emphasised that there is a clear link between “armed conflict and violence and conflict-induced food insecurity”. This briefing provides ample evidence of this.

In two months alone, food production factories and markets in Sudan have been destroyed, some of which have been looted of remaining supplies, and water infrastructure has been damaged, severely disrupting water supplies to millions of civilians. Imports and exports through Port Sudan have been disrupted. Humanitarian aid agencies have faced severe security threats to their ability to deliver food aid, as well as large-scale looting, both of which exacerbate pre-existing obstacles, including large funding shortfalls. Amid the crisis, conflicts between farmers and herders continue, with the potential for their aggravation by increased security vacuums and the militarisation of ethnic identities, especially during upcoming harvest seasons.

The conflict has also had wide-ranging indirect consequences. Markets have been forced to close due to insecurity, and food prices have risen rapidly. Hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced nationally and internationally, frequently fleeing with little money and no sources of income. Food assistance and the generosity of relatives and local communities have often been their only survival options. Additionally, disruptions to activities at Port Sudan have had reverberating adverse effects on certain food products both nationally internationally.

In response to the crisis, people in Sudan and diaspora groups have developed coping mechanisms to identify available food products and allow their safe distribution to those in need. This often involves collaborating with neighbourhood resistance committees. Simultaneously, international aid agencies have provided crucial food assistance to people in Sudan and displaced peoples arriving in neighbouring countries.

Aid agencies have faced severe security and access challenges, while local front-line assistance workers have simply had no choice but to do the best they possibly can in dangerous and challenging situations, usually without any form of security risk management support.

9. Recommendations

9.1 General recommendations

- **Anticipate and mitigate foreseeable and emerging conflict impacts.**
 - With Sudan's rainy season running from June to September, the delivery of seeds to regions that may become difficult to access due to flooding should be prioritised, ahead of the sowing of millet and sorghum crops in June and July. This should be considered in the broader context in which **security challenges** are already reported to have created challenges for farmers planting crops.
 - Protection programmes should recognise the enhanced risks of conflict-induced food insecurity for vulnerable demographic groups. These include the elderly, who may be trapped in their homes in cities while violence erupts around them and are unable to access food or water, and women who may feel it is necessary to forgo meals so that their children can eat. The acknowledgement of such risks should be incorporated into needs assessments, and food assistance should be allocated accordingly.
 - Farmers should be supported to reduce the incentives for them to pursue negative coping strategies. These strategies include the **likely scenario** that farmers will seek to cope by growing fewer crops because of declining profits and that they will turn to bush products (including charcoal), thereby causing environmental degradation and further reducing future food production.
 - The heightened risk of farmer-herder conflicts during the upcoming harvest season should be recognised. Where security conditions allow, programmatic interventions should be implemented based on the **strong evidence** that locally led peacebuilding initiatives can help overcome animosities between disputing groups and prevent disagreements from becoming violent.
 - Assistance and protection programmes should take into account the likely disparities in food security outcomes between rural and urban areas resulting from Sudan's centralised transportation system, and disparities in diets and food sources.
- **Support local actors and diaspora groups helping aid responses.**
 - Technical, financial, and organisational support should be provided to diaspora groups and locally led organisations in Sudan responding to food insecurity. The latter are especially important, given the concentration of aid agency bases at Port Sudan and the logistical impracticalities this creates. Aid agencies should identify relevant individuals and groups and support them accordingly. Such local actors include:
 - food banks;
 - neighbourhood resistance committees and other civil society organisations; and
 - families and other individuals supporting newly arrived displaced people in Sudan and neighbouring countries.
- **Mitigate security risks where possible to allow aid access.**

The international aid sector is crucial to reducing civilian suffering and helping to address rising food insecurity. Aid agencies should take strategic and anticipatory action to mitigate security risks.

- They should monitor conflict incidents, threats of violence against personnel and access difficulties to ensure the best possible understanding of operating contexts. Where possible, this information should be shared with other aid agencies to help reduce the likelihood of further incidents and increase the likelihood of aid being safely delivered.¹⁵
- They should support Sudanese organisations with advocacy to ensure the better protection of civilians who locally assist others in conflict-affected areas.

9.2 Recommendations for specific stakeholders

- **International humanitarian law duty bearers and conflict parties**
 - All feasible precautions must be taken to prevent the damaging or destruction of civilian objects such as markets and water infrastructure.
 - Members of the SAF and RSF must uphold the **Jeddah Declaration** (May 2023) by protecting civilians and allowing humanitarian corridors and the safe passage of aid, including food assistance.
 - Stakeholders must be made aware of the long-term negative impacts that conflict has on food security.
- **Policymakers and national and international civil servants**
 - National and international civil servants should cooperate across borders, especially in relation to Sudan's neighbouring countries and the need for targeted humanitarian food assistance for displaced peoples fleeing to these countries.
 - Policymakers and other relevant stakeholders should lobby to ensure that Port Sudan and other key transport routes remain open so that food and other key commodities can be transported into and out of Sudan.
- **Civil society organisations**
 - Civil society groups in Sudan and internationally should continue to highlight the devastating consequences of conflict for food security and the lives of civilians, and should stress the urgent need for concerted action.
 - Governments should be lobbied to adequately fund aid agencies and international organisations supporting the aid response in Sudan.
- **Researchers and analysts**
 - The position of individuals and actors affected by the conflict should be mapped in relation to the Sudanese food system, especially in terms of interdependencies between actors. This will allow for the likely and relative impact of conflict events on food security to be better understood and appropriate mitigation measures to be adopted.
 - More broadly, researchers and analysts should continue to monitor the ongoing crisis so that policymakers and humanitarian aid agencies have the necessary information to respond in a targeted and context-specific way.

- 1 The term “Darfur region” is used throughout to collectively denote the Sudanese states of Central, South, East, North and West Darfur.
- 2 An exception to this is along the river Nile in the far north, where winter wheat is planted. The figure for the proportion of people living in the countryside or rural areas is that reported in May 2022.
- 3 When South Sudan became independent from Sudan in 2011, the Abyei area was claimed by both countries, and as a result was accorded “special administrative status”. The dispute over which country owns it has still not been resolved.
- 4 The incidents included in the FIVC-Sudan dataset were classified according to the MEFIC framework. For an explanation of this framework, see the Insecurity Insight publication “Data and information on conflict affecting food insecurity”.
- 5 An exception to this is along the river Nile in the far north, where winter wheat is planted. The figure for the proportion of people living in the countryside or rural areas is that reported in May 2022.
- 6 Insecurity Insight follows the Rome Declaration of 1996 by defining food security as existing when “all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life”. Conversely, food insecurity prevails when these conditions are absent. The term “hunger” refers to “an uncomfortable or painful physical sensation caused by insufficient consumption of dietary energy”. People can be food insecure without experiencing the condition of hunger. For further details, see the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) publication “Hunger and Food Insecurity”.
- 7 The incidents in the FIVC-Sudan dataset were compiled from those identified as having links to food insecurity in the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) database, Insecurity Insight’s Security in Numbers Database (SiND) and other openly available sources. Duplicates were removed and events were classified based on the Monitoring and Evaluation of Food Insecurity in Conflict Framework (MEFIC).
- 8 The incidents included in the FIVC-Sudan dataset were classified according to the MEFIC framework. For an explanation of this framework, see the Insecurity Insight publication “Data and information on conflict affecting food insecurity”.
- 9 The specified months for the sowing, growing and harvesting of millet, sorghum and wheat stated in this brief follow those specified by the UN FAO.
- 10 For further details on the importance of locally led peacebuilding initiatives and relevant case studies from a leading academic and practitioner, see Séverine Auteserre, *The Frontlines of Peace: An Insider’s Guide to Changing the World*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021.
- 11 This figure of three million is based on an earlier and lower reported figure and the assumption that double the amount of food would be able to feed double the number of people.
- 12 The IPC scale has five phases.
- 13 In phase 4 of the IPC scale, households may also be “able to mitigate large food consumption gaps but only by employing emergency livelihood strategies and asset liquidation”. For further details regarding the IPC levels, see Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, “Understanding the IPC Scales”.
- 14 Included in the category of “other oily seeds” are sesame seeds, oil seeds and oleaginous fruits, cotton seeds, mustard seeds, poppy seeds, palm nuts and kernels, safflower seeds, castor oil seeds and shea nuts. For further details, see Observatory of Economic Complexity, “Other Oily Seeds”.
- 15 For further guidance for aid agencies regarding the mitigation of security risks, see Global Interagency Security Forum, *Partnerships and Security Risk Management: A Joint Action Guide for Local and International Aid Organisations*.

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